

Human Services Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-911

AN ACT REQUIRING THE STATE TO PROVIDE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR

Title: PRENATAL CARE.

Vote Date: 3/9/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/23/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Human Services Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would require the Commissioner of Social Services to provide medical assistance for prenatal care through the “unborn child option” under the HUSKY B program, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This bill seeks to expand access to prenatal care to address health inequities and improve health outcomes for pregnant women and children. In turn, this investment is cost-saving for the state in the long-term.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Deidre Gifford, Commissioner, Department of Social Services opposes this bill because the Governor’s budget does not include funding for this expansion. She notes that the Department “recognizes the merits of expanding funding for prenatal care for women who do not currently qualify under wither CHIP or Medicaid due to their immigration status.”

Sarah Healy Eagan, Acting Child Advocate, Office of The Child Advocate strongly supports this bill as it improves birth outcomes for children, improves health equity in the state, and helps reduce preventable child fatalities. The OCA believes that expanding access to undocumented pregnant women will encourage preventative care, thus reducing expenditures associated with poor health and development outcomes for children.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Nicole Sanclemente, Policy and Program Associate, Connecticut Women’s Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)

Patricia A. Rossi

Amanda N. Kallen, Connecticut Section Vice Chair, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists,

Samantha Cohen Tamulis, Certified Nurse Midwife

They all support this bill because access to healthcare is a human right and should be accessible to all pregnant people regardless of their immigration status. They all comment that prenatal care is vital in ensuring improved health outcomes for parents and newborns. Ms. Kallen and Ms. Tamulis add that when pregnant women cannot access medical insurance during their pregnancy, they are oftentimes forced to decline important testing and delay seeking care because of excessively high costs. Consequently, the rates of childbirth-related hospitalization for undocumented women are much higher.

Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Counsel, American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT)

Gretchen Raffa, Senior Director, Public Policy, Advocacy & Organizing, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

They support this bill because denying people access to health care during pregnancy is reproductive injustice. This bill is a step in ensuring that all people, regardless of immigration status, are given access to life-saving prenatal care and full reproductive autonomy. ACLU-CT believes that this bill aims to “rectify the twin injustices of immigration status discrimination and denial of reproductive autonomy by providing that any person who gives birth to a child eligible for HUSKY coverage shall also be entitled to coverage during their pregnancy.” This continuum of care will significantly improve health outcomes for children and mothers, lowering the staggering rates of maternal mortality rates and racial disparities in pregnancy outcomes in Connecticut.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

There are no sources of opposition to this bill.

Reported by: Gianna Vollano

Date: March 21, 2021